

A N

1607/5600

ACCOUNT OF THE RIOTS

Which were made at a

DISSENTING MEETING-HOUSE

A T

CLAPHAM in SURRY,

On THURSDAY, DECEMBER 27, 1759,
and the THURSDAY following.

When the WINDOW, DOOR, PULPIT, SEATS,
LINING, &c were broken in pieces, the People
insulted, pelted, and their Lives endangered, &c.

TOGETHER WITH

The METHODS which have been pursued, in order to
bring the Offenders to Justice; which have hitherto
proved INEFFECTUAL.

By JOHN DOLMAN,
Pastor of a CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, at the
New Meeting-House in *Black's Fields, Strand-Fields,*
Southwark.

Doth our Law judge any Man before it heareth him?

L O N D O N :

Printed in the Year MDCC LX.

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ACCOUNT
OF THE
RIOTS at CLAPHAM.

THROUGH the importunity of friends I have been prevailed on to draw up the following narrative; and the aspersions of enemies have rendered its publication very necessary, that the world may have an opportunity of being informed of an affair, which has been strangely and falsely misrepresented by some; while the severe, barbarous, and cruel usage which we have met with, is hardly, if at all credited by others. These reasons being assigned, leave no room, I think, to offer any apology for my publishing it. I have only attempted a PLAIN relation of facts, and hope it will be received with candour, and read with impartiality.

I am sensible, that in giving such a relation, it is very difficult to avoid giving offence by what may be construed as acrimony of spirit; as appearing by severe reflections, or bitter

invectives. This I think and hope I have carefully avoided; and, should any thing of this kind have escaped my pen, I can only say, it is undesigned.

As near as I can remember, in the month of July last, I happened to be in company with two persons, who then did, and still continue to reside at Clapham, in Surry. Our conversation turned upon religious matters; and, amongst other things, they complained of the loss of the reverend Mr. Venn, the late curate of that parish; and said, they should be very glad if any minister would be kind enough to come to Clapham to give them a gospel sermon. Our friend, at whose house we were, said to me, "Sir, can't you comply with this?" I replied, "I have no objection; but, as I am a Dissenter from the established church, perhaps my going to preach there would not be so acceptable to their friends, otherwise I am very willing and ready, if by any means my ministry might be made useful and profitable to any."

They then asked me of what particular denomination of Dissenters? I said, "That which is called Independent." They answered, with respect to themselves that made no difference; and that they would communicate the affair to others of their friends, and, if they approved of my coming, they would write me word.

Accordingly, soon after I received a letter to this purpose, That many persons would be very glad to meet me at Clapham. Upon which invitation I went there, and spent an hour with a few persons in singing, prayer, and reading the Word of God. This I continued to do once a week, for some time; at length some of our Friends proposed procuring a place for me, where I might publicly preach the Word of God, believing it might be for the glory of God, and the good of souls. This was agreed to, and enquiry was made after a suitable place for such a purpose. At length a commodious brick house was fixed on, which had formerly been used as stable, but had been for some time past unoccupied. I waited on the proprietor of said place; I frankly told her the use we wanted it for. To which she answered, "I have no objection to that; but on account of the terms of taking it, the affair lay in suspense for sometime; but at length two of our Friends agreed with the lady to take it for a year certain, from Sept. 1791,

Our next concern was to render it as neat and as decent as we could for a place for the worship of Almighty God. For this purpose we lined it with matts, erected a desk or pulpit, and fixed seats for the conveniency of the auditory. This done, consistent with my profession as a Protestant Dissenting Minister, and conformable to the law of the land, I

registered the said house for a place of public worship, agreeable to the statute of the 1st of king William and queen Mary. This register bears date December 17, 1759, and I accordingly preached there on the Thursday following; at which time there was little or no disturbance; though I then thought it my duty to tell the auditory, "This house is
 " now registered according to law, as a place
 " for the public worship of Almighty God;
 " and that, as I acted under the sanction of
 " the laws of England, I hoped no one
 " would attempt to disturb us, lest they
 " should thereby incur the penalty of the
 " law."

Here I cannot but stop in pursuing my narration, and address myself to every candid, honest, ingenuous mind in general, and appeal to those of the parish of Clapham in particular, and ask, What have I done to deserve the censure, ill-treatment, and severe usage which I have met with? Have I acted in open defiance of any one law in force? Have I not complied, strictly complied, with the standing statutes of the realm? Can any one accuse me, either in public or private, as acting contrary to the duty I owe to my God, my king, and my country? It matters not to say, "You are a Dissenter, and you
 " shall not preach here." What kind of language is this? Have not I a right to worship God according to my conscience? Have not the king, lords and commons of the
 realm

realm granted me this privilege? This air of absolute power and uncontrouled authority breathes neither good sense, sound reason, nor Christian charity. Nay, it is as much beneath the man of reason, and as contrary to the judgment of candour, as it is inconsistent with the spirit of true christianity. But I proceed.

On December the 25th last, I was informed by some persons from Clapham, that a certain gentleman was determined to PUNISH me for preaching there, and that, at all events, he would hinder me for the future; and that accordingly they heard I was to be taken up the next Thursday. Horrible offence indeed! However, I was no-ways intimidated; but on the Thursday (the day I was threatened to be taken up) the 27th of December, I went there, as usual, to preach, and several of my friends from Shad-Thames went with me.

About half past six in the evening, as I drew near to the meeting-house, I heard a voice saying (as near as I can recollect), "Here he comes; here he comes. Halloo him! halloo him!" I also saw a great number of persons assembled, two of whom were on horseback, one of whom, I was afterwards told, was one of the church-wardens of Clapham, whose name I shall have occasion hereafter to mention. I being willing to prevent any disturbance that might arise in the place of worship, before I attempted to

go in, asked, "Is there any gentleman here who has any particular business with me?" I do not remember any one answered but the church-warden, who said, "You have no business here; there are churches enough, and here you shall not be." Strange and authoritative as these words must appear to every judicious thinking person, yet he repeated them several times. As I found no one had any real business to speak to me about, I thought silence better than to give an answer to such a weak and unmeaning address.

I then went into the meeting, where I saw a person, who I was told was a constable. I asked him if he had any particular business with me? He answered, "No." I then said, "I hope we shall have peace;" and went up into the pulpit. Which I had no sooner done, but I saw the church-warden pushing on towards me; and, whilst I was giving out one of the late Dr. Watts's hymns, I saw him disturb several people. Whilst I was engaged in prayer my eyes were shut, so that I saw nothing; but heard a continued noise and stir among the people. Prayer being ended, I took my text, *MATT. i. 21. Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins:* the church-warden, with others, still continuing to disturb the congregation. I saw him push several people; but with what intent I know not. At length the noise increased, and the tumult was so great,

great, that I was obliged to desist for a time, and asked if any person there knew the name of that gentleman? pointing to the person who afterward appeared to be the church-warden. It was answered, "His name is Hubbard." I addressed myself to him, and said, "Sir, you do not use us well; you ought not to disturb us." Or words to that effect. He replied, "You have no business here; you shall not be here; there are churches enough."

I had some notion that one of their constables name was Hubbard; I then asked him, "Sir, are you a peace-officer? If you are, I beg of you to keep peace." It was answered, That he was not a peace-officer; but that a peace-officer stood by. I then desired him to keep peace. I think he answered, He would know what business I had there. I then shewed my certificate, and also the certificate for the house; which he looked at, and said, "I suppose you will have no objection to shew these to some other persons by and by." To which I answered, "No." The constable then cried out once or twice, "Silence!" I then attempted to proceed in my sermon, and the constable and Mr. H-bb-d soon withdrew out of my sight. On which the noise increased greatly, insomuch that I was again obliged to desist from preaching, and attempted to give out an hymn; but found the noise so great, that the people could not hear. So I concluded with a short prayer; and, upon our attempting to go out

of the meeting-house, one of our Friends was knocked down, and after that the window was broken in pieces. Such treatment I think will sufficiently justify me in going the next day to Justice H--m--d for a warrant. At which time Mr. H--m--d told me, that some persons from Clapham had been with him, to know what could be done to me for preaching there. By virtue of the warrant obtained against Mr. Hubbard, he appeared before the justice the Monday following, when, for want of proper notice, I was not so fully provided with my evidence who saw the affair, and could have given a more full and circumstantial account of Mr. Hubbard's behaviour: however, there appeared a person, who, with myself, was sufficient to convict upon the face of the statute. Upon our appearing before Justice H--m--d, I found there Sir Thomas H--k--y and two attorneys, and I believe ten or twelve more well-dressed persons, and the person accused of the disturbance; and from one and another were put a great many foolish, trifling, impertinent interrogatories to me. Much severe censure, reflection, and a great deal of raillery were thrown out against me, of which Sir Thomas had his share. Abundance of quirks, quibbles, and evasions were made about the house; that what was once a stable, could not be a house; and so, if not a house, why then (wise and wonderful conclusion!) I had imposed upon the bishop of Winchester in obtaining the certificate.

cate. So that, upon the whole, the Justice's advice was, that I had better drop the affair; that I should only injure myself in the prosecution; that he wished me well; and that I was certainly in the wrong, and therefore, as a friend, he gave me such advice. But as I had no desire of persecuting through a spirit of revenge, yet I think it my duty to prosecute such persons who transgress against the law of the land, in being guilty of such an offence, which strikes at the liberty of the subject, and endangers the lives of the people; therefore I would not comply.

When the gentlemen saw that neither threatening, bantering, nor pretended civility would prevail with me to drop the cause, my friend and self were examined; the substance of which, as near as I can possibly recollect, is as I have already related it, concerning the behaviour of Mr. Hubbard and others at our meeting-house on the 27th of December.

My Friend's declaration coincided with mine in every particular; but he added, that Mr. Hubbard came behind him in the meeting-house, and so disturbed him during the singing, that he was obliged to desist; for he would not suffer him to hear the words of the hymn as I gave them out; and said several times to him, "Get off from your a—e; you worship God by halves." That he desired him not to be so near him, for that his breath was offensive; and told him, He believed he would repent to-morrow what he was then doing.

doing. Upon which the said Mr. Hubbard left him; and he saw him go and interrupt and disturb others in their worship of God.--- To all which we were sworn, and then examined.

After which, so many unkind speeches and aspersions were thrown out against me, that had any impartial, candid person been present, they must and would have concluded, from the treatment I met with, that I was looked on as the delinquent, and was used as an aggressor. Let truth be heard; let even-handed justice hold the balance; and let impartial determination give sentence. I ask no favour, but justice; I ask no advantage, but the common protection of the law; which I have a right to claim, as an Englishman, a Christian, and a Protestant; all which one would have reasonably expected I should have found. I was particularly asked, "Of what denomination are you?" To which I gave his worship answer, That I was a dissenting minister, of that body called Independent.

But still the old tune, of dropping the affair, and making it up, was chanted. This I could not consent to, unless restitution was made for the damages done, and the aggressors made sensible of their illegal proceedings; for as I was determined to proceed in the work of the ministry at Clapham, if this affair should be connived at, any person might think himself at liberty to commit what outrage and insult he pleased, and be led to conclude he might knock on the head me, or any of the congregation,

congregation, like mad dogs, and think there
 was no interposition of law or justice in our
 behalf. The latter part of this relation I
 think will fully justify my reasoning thus, and
 abundantly prove what I suspected. His wor-
 ship was pleased to say, It would be looked
 on as a rigorous prosecution. This I submit
 to the world. Can this construction, in any
 fair and candid manner, be given of it?
 However, I told his worship I would consult
 my attorney and friends, and if Mr. Hubbard
 would agree to make good all damages, pro-
 vided they approved of it, I was willing to
 drop farther prosecution. Upon which it was
 agreed for us to meet again the Friday fol-
 lowing at Mr. H-m-d's; but, before we
 parted, Sir Thomas H-k-y said to me,
 "Remember you are to preach no more at
 Clapham." "Sir," said I, "if my life is
 spared, I shall." He said, "You shall
 not; for I will spend half my fortune against
 you to hinder you." Upon this I held up the
 act of parliament upon which our liberty is
 founded, and said, "Sir Thomas, here is the
 law you oppose, and your fortune must con-
 tend against *this*, this *law* of the *land*." Sir
 Thomas then replied, "I will call in the
 military power, and place a file of mus-
 queeteers at the door of the meeting-house,
 to keep you out; for you shall not come
 there." This that worthy gentleman was
 pleased to repeat several times; though I
 hope, when the warmth of his zeal and the
 heat

heat of his passion is subsided, and cool reflection takes place, he will be concerned to think of such ----- what shall I say? ----- expressions. --- But I forbear. Sir Thomas then desired that I would stay away the next Thursday. I coolly told Sir Thomas my reasons for my intention of preaching there on Thursday next, which were these: Several persons who attended the preaching came a long way, and it was a pity that they should be disappointed; and as I was an Englishman, and was acting no way contrary to, but had the law to protect me, I could not in reason or conscience give it up. As to his file of musqueteers, he might use his pleasure; I was not afraid of them; he might order them to seize me, if he pleased. A stander-by said, "I suppose it is too good a living to give up so easily." To which I replied (as the truth is), That I never had; either directly or indirectly, received the value of a single farthing of any one, for all my trouble, save sometimes a meal's meat when there; nor did I ever expect any thing. --- To which Sir Thomas was pleased to say, "I believe that is true enough."

Upon leaving Mr. H--m--d's house, as I turned off the steps, I asked Sir Thomas for my certificate, which he had in his possession; and I said, "Sir Thomas, you now appoint Friday Morning to meet here again." Said he, "I will not meet at all, unless you stay away from Clapham next Thursday." I said, "I will not stay away." Then said he, "If
" you

“ you do come, stand by Broken Legs
 “ AND ARMS.” Doth not somewhat like
 true prophecy appear in this? However, it is
 no difficult thing to foretell what will come
 to pass, if we are able and determined to
 make the event prove the prediction. Ne-
 vertheless, we saw no file of musqueteers; nor
 were we delivered up to the civil power, I
 assure you, reader. The event will prove
 this, in the following part of the narration.

Well, between this and Thursday, Jan. 3,
 Sir Thomas (as I am well informed) left no
 stone unturned to hinder me from preaching.
 Word was sent me, that the person who let
 the house had no legal right so to do; but
 this no way intimidated me: for I accordingly
 went, with four friends; and, when we came
 to Clapham, we were glad, as we had some
 hopes all things would be peaceable and quiet;
 for we were now told by a person, that Sir Tho.
 said to him, That he would have nothing
 more to do in opposing us; and that he would
 punish any one who did. That Sir Thomas
 was going from Clapham, and would not be
 there all night. Nevertheless, as I am cre-
 dibly informed, Sir Thomas returned home
 again the same evening, another way than he
 went, between six and seven o’clock.

But another person told us, That he had
 reason to believe we should be greatly disturbed
 this night; for, as he was coming over the
 common, he saw about ten men, whom he
 watched into a smith’s shop by the meeting-
 house;

house; that by their talk (which he overheard) he suspected they were hired to do us mischief that night. However, we went to the meeting-house at the usual time, and no sooner began service, but the rioters began their noise, which was very great. An aged man, who stood near the door, had much dirt thrown in his face, some of which went into his eyes; being intended, as I suppose, to prevent his discovering who they were. Then dirt, stones, and (as I am informed) brickbats, were thrown in amongst us apace. I had no small share of them in the pulpit. One man was struck with a brickbat on his eyebrow; a woman with another on the breast. Our friends then shut the door, to keep out the stones and dirt, &c. Then the rioters broke the glass over the door, and threw in their dirt, &c. At my friends request I desisted from going on with the service, as we thought our lives were in great danger. And I went to the meeting-house door, in order to go out; but the rioters had fastened it on the outside: and some of them, as I am informed, got into the loft over us; as I verily think in my conscience the better to execute the purpose before-mentioned, of **BROKEN LEGS AND ARMS**: for besides what the knight said to me, a friend of ours was advised to stay from the meeting that night; "for," said the adviser, "there will be *dreadful work*; take care of **BROKEN LEGS AND ARMS**." However, when this same per-
son

son (our friend) afterwards saw the man with whom he had the above conversation, upon saying there were no legs and arms broke, he replied, " Ah! 'twas well for you that you " had a back-door to go out at." I went first and saw some of the rioters, who were then employed in pelting the building. Upon seeing my friends safe, I returned to put out the lights, and found one of our friends locking the fore-door, in which I assisted, and saw it locked, and with him came out of the meeting-house again at the back-door, and went away, leaving the mob there, and within a quarter of an hour after, I heard a much greater noise, as if they were breaking open the door: which I afterwards found they did; and broke it all in pieces. They brought out the pulpit and benches, and broke them also in pieces; tore away great part of the mats, and carried them off to the sign of the C—k; where, with many huzza's, they drank *damnation to me, and all that heard me.*

A young man, who used to attend my preaching, they laid hold of, and wrapped up in the matting; and would have thrown him into a large pond of water, had they not been prevented. On being told they would certainly come into trouble for such uproar and doings; some answered, " We fear nobody: we are " employed by a gentleman on the other side " of the common; and he will stand by us."

On Friday morning I attended Justice Horn-d again. But being there before Mr. Hubbard

Hubbard came, I now told the justice I was provided with more evidences; one of which would be able more fully to open and explain and prove the manner of Mr. Hubbard's beginning the riot at the door, on the Thursday was se'nnight, before I came; and who heard Mr. Hubbard offer the rioters strong drink for rioting. The justice said, he would take his recognizance, and that Sir Tho. H. would be his bail.

When Mr. Hubbard came, Sir Thomas also came with him; who pulled out of his pocket a copy of the certificate which he had procured from the bishop of Winchester's court, and compared it with mine, to see if mine was genuine; which appeared so to be. I was asked what I intended to do? I replied, "To carry on the prosecution. For which purpose I have brought more persons, who saw the riot, and are ready to give evidence concerning it;" who I desired might be called in, and examined: but this was refused. I requested it again; but it was denied. This request I repeated three or four times, but was told it should not be.

Then the constable before-mentioned was sworn in favour of Mr. Hubbard, who deposed "that Mr. Hubbard only spoke to the *people*, and not to *me*." Which, by the way, I must observe is an offence against the STATUTE.

His worship was pleased to discharge the warrant! But, reader; it is natural, and I know

know you are ready to ask, What was the reason that could be assigned for so doing? Well then; the same reason which was given to me, I repeat again to you; ---- *It was for WANT of EVIDENCE!*

Perhaps you may be ready to blame me; and say, "Why did not you get proper evidence?" In answer to which I refer you to page 12. where you will find two evidences sworn; which, by the tenor of the statute, appear sufficient. And I only just mention, that now there were three more, who stood in Mr. H-m-d's yard, before his parlour-window; to whom I pointed, and desired they might be called in. But this was denied; and the warrant, as you have heard, was discharged, *for want of evidence!* ---- The worthy knight's declaration then was, "You have the law on your side: but was it in my power, I would crush the whole clan of you (Dissenters, I suppose) under my feet."

During this meeting at Mr. H-m-d's, Sir Thomas said, "So: I hear you were disturbed last night by some *seafaring men*. --- I am sure that they are not *Clapham People*. --- If you want to catch them, you must go to sea for them." I replied; "No, Sir; they were not *seafaring men*. We know several of them." Perhaps it will be but a short time ere the public know them too.

I had once more a strong contest with Sir Thomas; who would insist, that as our meeting

ing-place was once a Stable, therefore it could not, by any fair construction, be deemed a House.---I replied, That the term House was not so limited and restrained as he would insist on; for it was an appellation given to a Dog-Kennel; which it is common to call a *Dog-House*. At which Sir Thomas was pleased to conclude the argument with this charitable prayer, "I wish thou hadst no better house; and that thou wert chained there till the day of thy death." Thus this meeting concluded: but,

On Monday following, I received a message from Mr. Hubbard, desiring another meeting; in order to make up the affair, so far as related to his particular. I sent for answer, That peace and quietness was what we sued for; and that I would meet him on the Thursday following.

After the messenger was gone, I concluded it needful to see Mr. Hubbard, that I might hear his terms, and lay them before my friends. Accordingly I went the next morning, and met Mr. Hubbard, just as I was entering Clapham; who first spoke to me of his sending the messenger, and desired the affair might be ended; and added, that he should have done it before, but Sir Thomas would not suffer him. He likewise said, He was ashamed of, and sorry for, the ill usage that Sir Thomas treated me with before the justice. He then offer'd to go back with me into the town, in order to settle and agree upon the terms of making up the affair. But as he was going upon some business, I said,
" Go

“ Go and finish your business, and call on me
 “ as you come back,” at a house I appointed.
 Which he did, and the messenger he sent to
 me came with him.

Then Mr. Hubbard, before several witnesses, declared he was *sent* to the meeting that night he disturbed the auditory; and desired to make an end of the affair; and, as he believed us to be reasonable people, he would agree to our own terms; and promised to meet us the next Thursday, so to do. We were each to bring a friend or two, and dine together at Clapham.

Accordingly on Thursday two friends went with me to the place appointed; where, soon after we came, Mr. Harvey, an attorney, met us, and told us Mr. Hubbard was not to come; and that he came to let us know that I and my friends might use our pleasure in regard to the prosecution.

After dinner Mr. Harvey and I enter'd into some conversation upon my proceedings at Clapham, &c. in preaching the Gospel. Among other things, I observed to him (which declaration I would also make to the world) that we pay little regard to the structure or appearance of a place of worship; having been taught by the Word of God, that God is to be worshipped in Spirit and in Truth: which kind of true worship may be paid in one place as well as another. In this respect God is not to be worshipped more at Jerusalem, or the Mount, than any other place set apart for that purpose; and
 therefore

therefore we paid no regard to the appearance of the house we chose for that purpose; and that it was more commendable in the people to rent a place they could pay for, than to build one and never pay for it.

By Mr. Harvey I was now informed of the strong prejudice that still existed in the minds of some gentlemen against those who attended my ministry. He said, That some had agreed not to employ any one person who should come to hear me; and that such as persisted so to do, they would discharge from any employ they were engaged in under them.

I then appealed to him (which I would beg also to do to the thinking and candid world in general) whether every man has not an undoubted right to worship God according to his conscience? And whether, if a man behaves as a good subject, and faithfully discharges the social and relative duties of life, and his principles of religion do not teach him to act contrary thereto, to act as those gentlemen had threatened and agreed to do, was not *severe persecution*? To which he replied (and so I think must every unprejudiced mind) in the affirmative.

The same evening I was credibly informed that one Mr. B--i--k had been endeavouring (tho' in vain) to instigate a gentleman to discharge his gardener for the said offence. But the gentleman was not so cruel and prejudiced as to comply with such instigations. Two persons I also hear are already warned to quit their

their houses, for no other crime than hearing the Gospel of our Lord Jesus from my mouth.

One thing I could not help remarking; that in the whole course of our frequent meetings before the justice and elsewhere, not one single crime was laid to the charge either of myself or the people (I do not hereby mean to insinuate that we are perfect) but this, "That *I preached, and They heard me.*" Which the gentlemen insist upon should not be, without assigning one reason for the same.

This is the grand cause of all that insult, riot, and outrage which we have met with, and which I have here faithfully related. At present I am obliged, thro' fear of my life, to desist from preaching at Clapham: And for the same reason the people are deterred from attending to hear me. Our meeting-house is ransacked; and the window, door, pulpit, seats, lining, &c. destroyed: The rioters triumphing; the poor people mobbed and insulted, insomuch that they scarcely dare to put their heads out of doors.

But shall RELIGION and LIBERTY thus lie bleeding, as a sacrifice to the rage and fury of a supposed hired and incensed Mob? And this too in the view of many who love the one and esteem the other? Surely No! It is to be hoped those who have power will reach forth a friendly hand to assist and redress our present grievances. And when this true state of the case is laid before them, many will be led to consider, that it is not from a principle
of

of more love and esteem that such arbitrary, merciless persons spare them; but because the God of Providence hath been more liberal and munificent in the good things of this life; and therefore they are not attacked from such quarters, to which the poorer sort of Christians are exposed, and, as we have seen, have actually suffered from.

P. S. The profits arising from the publication of this Narrative are to be applied to make good the damages the suffering injured people have met with, and reinstate them in the quiet possession of their civil and religious rights. Donations for that purpose will be kindly received by the distributors of this case. If any gentleman or lady have a desire for farther satisfaction in any of the particulars of this Relation, they shall be waited on, by directing to the Author.

Black's Fields, Southwark, Jan. 23. 1760.

F I N I S

